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ABSTRACT

This resource guide presents information on a variety of ways that animals can be used as a therapeutic modality with people having disabilities. Aspects addressed include: pet ownership and selection criteria; dogs (including service dogs, hearing/signal dogs, seeing leader dogs, and social/specialty dogs); horseriding for both therapy and fun; and monkeys to provide companionship and independence. Contact information and a brief description of services are provided for 12 organizations which specialize in training animals for use by people with disabilities. (DB)

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THE THERAPEUTIC VALUE OF ANIMALS

Once again you may recognize the delightful touch of our "in house" artist, the author and compiler of this "Therapeutic Value of Animals," namely Miss Kim Kavanagh. You may remember Kim's earlier contribution to our readers, PAM Repeater No. 82, ***Art is for Everyone.*** *Second only to her love for children, as evidenced in the earlier* ***Repeater,*** *is her tenderness and appreciation of the gifts which animals can share with us -- love, companionship, and sometimes very unique services.*

This REPEATER is designed to show you the wide range of animal-related services available to people with disabilities. Depending on your needs, animals can act as companions, therapeutic tools, or as helpers. An animal by the side of a person in a wheelchair can be a real ice-breaker or social bridge to help initiate conversations with people who would otherwise be uncomfortable approaching a person with a disability.

The utilization of animals as a therapeutic modality is not a new idea. History provides us with wonderful accounts of the benefits of animals to people, especially in the maintenance and restoration of health. Studies have shown that human interaction with animals reduces stress, provides an outlet for daily tension, and increases overall emotional well-being. But, until relatively recently, few in the medical community recognized the therapeutic value of human associations with animals. Animal assisted therapy is one of the most modern of all medicines. This seems hard to believe since almost all of us at some time have experienced the benefits derived from a relationship, or even a brief encounter with an animal. This may be simply enjoying the affection and loyalty of a dog, the peaceful stroking of a cat's back, or the companionship and conversation of a bird. For sometimes animals can fulfill our needs in a way that no human could.

The following information and references are for any person with a disability who is wanting increased independence through the use of an animal, persons in facilities that want to begin a pet therapy program, or an individual seeking animal-related recreational activities. Intended as a starting point only, the PAM Centre is not making any endorsements or recommendations - you must find and choose the program that best fits you or your child's needs. In addition to that, many of these service providers need volunteers to help in their organizations or to act as foster parents to their animals to help socialize them before they go into training.

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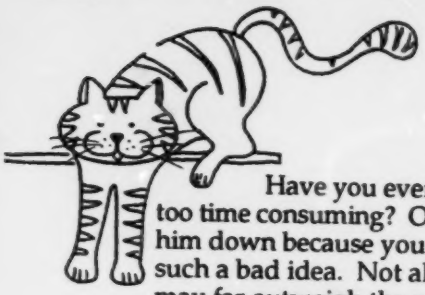


PETS COME IN ALL SHAPES AND SIZES

Have you ever thought about buying a pet but changed your mind because they are too time consuming? Or has your child come running to you begging for a pet and you turned him down because you thought about the expense and the mess? Well, maybe a pet might not be such a bad idea. Not all animals are expensive and the outcomes of your child's pet ownership may far outweigh the costs.

For a child especially, owning a pet is an undertaking that teaches him or her about responsibility. Animals need to be fed, and in many cases walked, brushed or let out...in short, they need to be taken care of. For adults, paying attention to the needs of a pet can make them more interested in taking care of themselves. For someone with a disability, who for the most part may be dependent on others for a number of his daily needs, there may be wonderful feelings that come from taking care of another living creature.

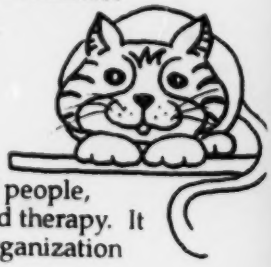
Pet ownership in general can have tremendous therapeutic value. Feelings of loneliness, for example, melt away when pets let you know in their own way that they are hungry, they want out...or "I love you!" Individuals with a disability who spend a great deal of time inside may feel isolated and have little interest in what there is to do today. By simply bringing an animal into the home, you may find that this individual's mind will be taken off his own problems and transferred to thoughts of taking care of the animal. Animals can be the friend that many people dream of having but have not had the opportunity to meet in social groups. It is amazing what having someone to talk to can do to a person's outlook on life. Pets can fulfill needs in ways that no human could.

Pets love with total acceptance and offer people the opportunity to touch and be touched. Stroking an animal who is sitting in your lap, or cuddling up to your leg can be a very soothing and peaceful activity. Research has also shown that the presence of animals helps people who are ill heal faster and seek medical services less often than people who don't own pets.

If you are thinking about getting a pet but don't know what to choose, here are a few examples to consider :

* **Birds** are great conversationalists and very entertaining. You will never feel alone with a bird in the room! They are also relatively inexpensive and easy to maintain.
* **Hamsters** are good pets for children; they are easy to pick up, quiet, and do not take up too much room.
* **Fish** are very low-maintenance pets and range from being kept in small, uncomplicated fish bowls to large well-equipped tanks.
* **Bunny rabbits** are soft, cuddly pets. You will however need to have some yard space to keep a cage.
* **Dogs** are loyal pals and come in all sizes and have a wide range of temperaments. This means that if you want a dog you can chose a breed that suits your lifestyle.
* **Cat** lovers will agree that cats are great company and can be a wonderful source of love and affection. Another positive aspect to owning a cat is that they are relatively independent and neat.

But wait!...There are other ways to be involved with animals without actually buying one. Regular trips to the zoo are enjoyable outings. Generally speaking, an animal will almost always bring a beaming smile to any face!



Delta Society
P.O. Box 1080
Renton, Washington 98057
(206) 226-7357

Services : The Delta Society is an international resource center on the interactions of people, animals and the environment, including the human-animal bond and animal-assisted therapy. It is a non-profit organization that serves professionals and the general public. This organization

will help individuals link up with people who provide assistance animals, teach people about the human-animal bond, and help institutions or local communities begin safe and effective animal programs.

DOGS AS HELPERS AND FRIENDS

We all wish to lead an active life, but for those people with physical disabilities each day holds a number of obstacles that have to be overcome. For many of us, these are things we take for granted. We may not fully understand the frustrations, for example, of attempting a task in darkness or not being able to hear the phone when it rings. Have you ever considered the idea of "employing" a dog as a helper? There are a number of organizations across the country that have seen the need to increase independence for those people who are blind, deaf, or who have physical disabilities. The belief behind these programs is that instead of having to be taken care of, persons with disabilities are being given opportunities to take charge of their own lives.

Dogs have long been recognized as man's best friend because they are non-judgmental, loyal and provide unconditional love and affection. After receiving assistance dogs, many individuals will tell you of the numerous benefits they have experienced in addition to the obvious physical ones. Some people gain the self-confidence to go back to work, school or simply to involve themself with social activities.

There are four main types of trained assistance dogs, each with its own area of specialization:

1. **Service dogs**
2. **Hearing/Signal dogs**
3. **Seeing/Leader dogs, and**
4. **Social/Specialty dogs.**

A very attractive aspect is that these dogs are willing and specially trained to serve the needs of their masters, and can relieve the feeling of guilt or dependency that individuals with a disability may have if they are continually having to ask another person to assist them.

SERVICE DOGS

Service dogs are trained to help people with a wide range of physical disabilities. Service dog candidates are carefully selected for their temperament and are matched with the personality of their future owner. Then they are carefully trained to meet the specific needs of the individual they will be working with. Some of the tasks that a service dog can be trained to do may be:

* Retrieve a dropped object or one off a high counter.
* Pull a wheelchair up a ramp in the event that an individual can't perform the task unassisted
* Pull open doors.
* Assist in wheelchair transfers or help someone up from a fall by acting as a sturdy brace.
* Turn on a light switch.
* Push an elevator button.
* Carry things, for example, books, bags and shopping baskets.

HEARING DOGS

Silence or peace and quiet is something we seek from the noisy world we live in. Yet you could feel lonely and isolated as a deaf or hearing impaired person who could not hear the telephone ring, a newborn's cries, or an alarm clock, and how anxious you would be if you were unable to hear warning sounds alerting you to danger. Professionally trained dogs are now able

to ease the burden plus offer companionship. This kind of friendship comes without the concern of whether or not you will be able to communicate effectively with your new friend, because dogs speak the universal language of love and are trained to respond to an individual's own set of cues and commands.

Dogs can be trained to alert their owners to such important sounds that occur in their environment as:

* A telephone
* A knock at the door, or a buzzer
* A smoke alarm
* Oncoming traffic
* A baby's cry
* An alarm clock
* Other sounds that indicate emergency or danger

Many of the options available to the deaf are mechanical devices that flash or vibrate, which are not always effective. The other option is the reliance on family, friends or aides in the home. These are not always the best arrangements for a person who wishes to live an independent life, because it does not allow either party much personal space or freedom.

SEEING DOGS

For someone who is blind or who has a severe visual impairment, the ability to get around freely is one of the most important factors contributing to independence. Leader dogs have allowed blind people to choose among a greater variety of job opportunities. They are helping many students move freely around campus and to travel between home, work or school. In addition, leader dogs enable blind persons to participate in the social life of the community.

Leader dogs are chosen for their intelligence, gentleness, sound temperament and compatibility with their owners. These are all qualities that we would ask for in someone on whom we rely and spend a great deal of time.

SOCIAL DOGS

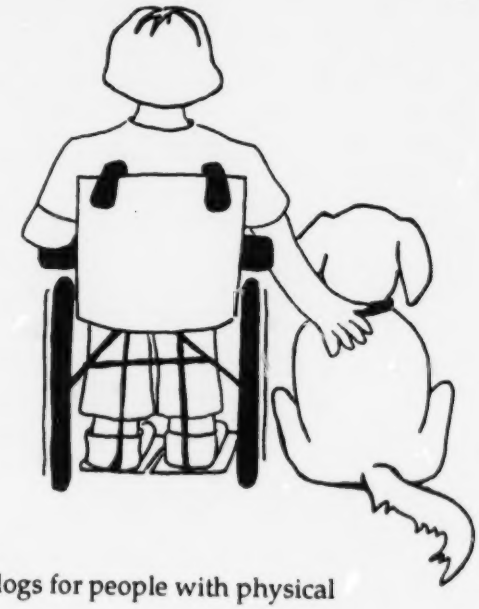
Social dogs are primarily trained to assist people with developmental disabilities, and the elderly by providing the loving interaction known as animal assistive therapy, or pet facilitated therapy. They can play a therapeutic role by, for example, providing sensory stimulation to an individual who pets them. They also provide affection and physical contact to people who lack physical closeness with others. Many hospitals and nursing homes have integrated animal therapies into their schedules because they see what a difference animals make to the lives of the people with whom they are working.

REFERENCES

Below is a listing of some organizations that train dogs as helpers. This is not a complete set of the available resources; however, if they do not service your local area, they should be able to refer you to a program that does. If you are interested in pursuing this but are unsure of whether or not you are eligible to receive a service dog, you can very easily call and ask.

Canine Companions for Independence
Contact : Benita M. Bergin, Executive Director.
P.O. Box 446
1221 Sebastopol Road
Santa Rosa, California 95402
(707) 528-0830

Services : Train service dogs for people with physical disabilities, signal dogs for people with hearing impairments, social dogs that aid in pet therapy programs, and specialty dogs for people with multiple disabilities, or the elderly, or others who may need special accommodations not listed above.



Canine Helpers for the Handicapped
5705 Ridge Road
Lockport, New York 14094
(716) 433-4035 (TDD/V)

Guiding Eyes for the Blind, Inc.
611 Granite Springs Road
Yorktown Heights, New York 10598
(914) 245-4024

International Hearing Dogs, Inc.
5901 East 89th Avenue
Henderson, Colorado 90640
(303) 287-3277 (TDD/V)

Handi - Dogs, Inc.
P.O. Box 12563
Tucson, Arizona 85732
(602) 326 - 3412 or 325 - 6466
Services: Dogs are trained as hearing dogs and support dogs for people with physical disabilities.

Leader Dogs for the Blind
1037 South Rochester Road
Rochester, Michigan 48063
(313) 651-9011
Services : Train dogs for people with visual impairments.

Paws With a Cause
1235 - 100th Street SE
Byron Center, Michigan 49315
(616) 698-0688 (TDD/V) or 1 -800-253 -7297 (TDD/V)
Services : Train hearing dogs for people with hearing impairments, and service dogs for people with a broad range of disabilities.

Support Dogs for the Handicapped, Inc.
St. Louis Chapter
P.O. Box 10607
St. Louis, Missouri 63129
(314) 487-2004
Services : Train support dogs for those with physical disabilities, support dogs for pet therapy, and hearing ear dogs for people with hearing impairments.

American Humane Association National Hearing Dog Project
9725 East Hampden Avenue
Denver, Colorado 50231
(303) 695-0811
Service : Provides contact for national hearing dog programs.

HORSERIDING - THERAPY AND FUN!

Horseriding is both a therapeutic activity and a fun experience for people of all ages. It is one of the newest types of "painless therapies" to receive attention and is an activity that can be adapted for just about anyone. Horseriding is not just for able-bodied individuals but is now being offered to people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, emotional disturbances, developmental disabilities, visual impairments, hearing impairments and autism. It is a large, rapidly growing movement overseen by the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association (NARHA). This is an all-volunteer non-profit organization within the United States and Canada that is dedicated to bringing the joys and benefits of horseback riding to physically and emotionally handicapped persons.

There are many benefits offered aside from simply having fun, but possibly an outstanding one is that it may be one of the few times in the lives of handicapped children or adults that they are doing something for themselves. What can beat the thrill of sitting on the back of a powerful animal and seeing a view of the world from a position well above normal eye-level!

Following are some examples of what can be gained from horseriding.

* There is sense of independence, and accomplishment in commanding a horse.

* By exercising the body you exercise the mind! A feeling of freedom can be gained from just sitting atop a horse.

* If a person with a disability is sitting in a wheelchair all day or using a crutch, he can't use his back muscles. Put this person on a horse and the action of the horse's strides stimulates and relaxes the whole muscular system of the body.

* A child with cerebral palsy will enjoy the pace of a pony or horse's four good legs, making a pleasant change for the child who may have an unrhythmic walk or who uses a wheelchair for mobility. This enables him to go on nature trails which would otherwise be impossible or full of frustration for him.

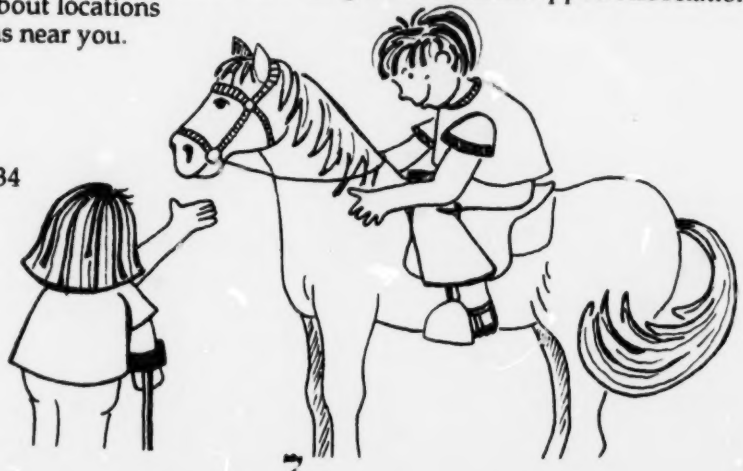
* A riding lesson can act as a positive learning experience. A child must listen to the coach's instructions and follow them.

* Horseback riding takes place for the most part in less urban areas and for many people who rarely get out of the city, or their own home, the countryside can be a very peaceful alternative.

* Horses chosen to participate in handicapped riding programs are very gentle in nature and can offer a child unparalleled friendship. A handicapped child will also learn trust, and this may broaden his outlook on attempting other new recreational activities.

Listed below is the address for the North American Riding for the Handicapped Association, if you wish to find out more about locations of horseback riding programs near you.

NARHA
12041 Tejone
Suite 530
Westminster, Colorado 80234
1-800-369-RIDE



MONKEYS - COMPANIONSHIP AND INDEPENDENCE!

Just as dogs are being trained as eyes for the blind, monkeys are being trained as hands for quadriplegics by an organization called Helping Hands. This organization has been helping many high-level quadriplegics regain a measure of independence, a more positive outlook, a life of companionship and higher self-esteem since 1979, when Mary Joan Willard got the idea that monkeys could be trained for people who need help with the chores of everyday life.

Capuchin monkeys were chosen for this job because they are small, intelligent, have a friendly nature and are highly human-like. You may remember them as the organ grinders' cute little sidekicks, earning their keep by dressing up and collecting money from passers-by. To their owner, a trained monkey becomes not only a working animal but also a pet, a child and a friend. These animals offer companionship, spending much of their time sitting in their owner's laps but at the same time they are always ready and willing to perform a helpful task.

The types of services provided by these lifetime helpmates are similar to those of a live-in nurse - the only difference being that they are fuzzy-faced, six- pound monkeys who are known to act like mischievous children at times, and stand-up comics on many other occasions. One of the benefits of this type of live-in helper is that a quadriplegic does not have to have an entire morning or afternoon planned before their aide leaves for the day. Eternally loyal, Capuchins can provide many diversions, leaving their owners no time to brood while enjoying the entertaining things their monkey friends get up to in the course of a day.

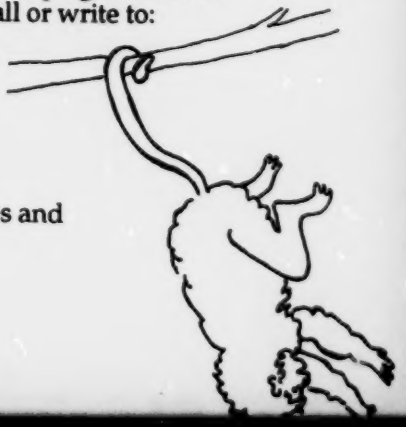
The jobs you can ask a monkey to perform are extensive. Wheelchairs can be rigged with a device that enables a high-level quadriplegic to point a red laser dot on any object in a room. The monkey is trained to respond to this and a verbal command by performing the appropriate task, such as taking a can of pop out of the refrigerator. Food is given as a reward for every task performed successfully. Some examples of the jobs Capuchins might do are to :

* Put a cassette into a tape player
* Fetch a magazine or book and place it on a reading stand
* Turn on and off lights
* Push buttons on televisions, VCR's or microwaves, for example
* Take food out of the refrigerator and help with feeding
* Comb hair
* Retrieve small items
* Scratch an itch

Capuchin helpers can grant people with spinal cord injuries the independence to live alone and can turn an apartment from merely a place to live into a lively home. They may also change some common reactions of people who stare or look away from someone in a wheelchair, to pleasant, friendly encounters because people often become so curious with the animal that they forget the person's condition. This is just another example of the way in which animals can act as social bridges and can relieve loneliness or isolation in more ways than one.

For information on eligibility and application for someone with quadriplegia, or about volunteer foster parenting with the Capuchin monkey program, you can call or write to:

Helping Hands - Simian Aides for the Disabled, Inc.
1505 Commonwealth Avenue
Boston, Massachusetts 02135
(617) 787-4419



Services : Currently this is the only program of its kind in the United States and the demand is high, therefore making the waiting list quite long.

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Animals can open doors to so many new opportunities for people with disabilities. We must never underestimate the power of even the most unusual therapeutic tools!

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